

CHICAGO FOOTNOTES

September 2015 By Jonathan Abarbanel



Jamil Khoury Photo Credit: Lisa Priedko

Silk Road Goes On the Road With Big Grant

Silk Road Rising has received \$150,000 National Grant (the largest grant in its history) from ArtPlace (sic) America, a consortium of foundations, financial institutions, and federal agencies. The grants are made to support the arts in a specific place within a community with the intent of having a broader impact on that community. For example, it might be a mosque in Naperville – and that’s precisely it in this instance as Silk Road develops new work *Mosque Alert*, by artistic director Jamil Khoury. He explains that *Mosque Alert* is “an artistic and civic engagement project that dramatizes the difficulties Muslims face across the country, due to Islamophobia and cultural biases, when attempting to

build houses of worship.” Khoury says it was inspired by the 2011 “Ground Zero” mosque controversy in New York City. Over the next 18 months, Silk Road Rising will use the Old Nichols Library in downtown Naperville as its fictional mosque. They will work with community partners to generate community-wide conversations that will examine fears associated with the building of a mosque—fictional or otherwise—in a Western community. Khoury will use this input to further shape the play. *Mosque Alert* will receive its world premiere production next March at Silk Road Rising’s permanent theater in The Loop.